

65°
Festival del film Locarno
1-11 | 8 | 2012

[Pardo Live](#) | [Programme](#) | [Tickets and passes](#)
2011 Festival | [Index and search](#) | [Pardo Live TV](#)

[General Information](#) | [Press](#) | [Industry](#)

Concorso Cineasti del presente

El árbol de las fresas

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El árbol de las fresas – Simone Rapisarda Casanova

Until recently, the fishing village of Juan Antonio subsisted on the north coast of Cuba, on the island's edge and at the cusp of the modern world. Sicilian-born and Montréal-based filmmaker Simone Rapisarda Casanova lived smack in the middle of the modest, lively villagers, filming them as they made their best out of very little indeed, but abandoned the project—until, not long after he left, Juan Antonio was wiped off the map by a hurricane. The decidedly weird (in a good way) document that remains is not only a record of a way of life that's vanished, but does so with a refined artistry unexpected from a first-time filmmaker. Rapisarda Casanova exhibits a remarkable patience in filming two of the village's families (and their many animals) as they themselves go about their own patient tasks, without the faintest clue of the disaster about to strike—though in the background the fluttering weather vanes and the chopping surf gives warning of the dangers ahead. His camera often lies low on the ground, observing the preparations for the next day's fishing trip (knife sharpening, net mending, fixing a tire wheel with a condom); each image has a life of its own, and the cumulative impact is hard to capture in words. This is truly unconventional ethnography—a documentary about what it means to make ethnography—with the filmmaker present in almost every scene, as the resilient villagers regale themselves in teasing him, baiting the director to respond. *El árbol de las fresas* is that response.

[Mark Peranson, 10 | 08 | 2011]

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